

# Undead 1311

## Chapter 1311: Amalgam of Disease (1)

Elita took a deep breath before glaring at the orifice on the wall. She had expected the old geezer to say something – to spout some remark about how she was still a fake Paladin Champion despite the display of her strength just now. However, no words came forth. The shadow she could see was still – unmoving.

"He's dead," Skullius said, answering Elita's unspoken question. "Well, at least he's no longer residing in that body. The life energy in him just ran out."

"I see," Elita said and she stowed her weapons. "I'm not surprised the nine would do all this with their lust for control, but they went too far when they imprisoned the souls of the Champions who fought for them."

"Seems to me like they chose to stand with the... nine, first though," Skullius said.

Elita looked defiant.

"Yes, but they wouldn't have known they were being led astray. It's not their fault," she said, her voice growing smaller with each word she said.

"You are going to trust HER words?"

Elita was taken aback.

"You heard our conversation?" she asked the Hybrid Warmoth. He was referring to the Fourth ranked Champion.

Skullius shrugged, or at least Elita thought he did; it was hard to tell with the great nimbus he wore.

"I'm very good at sensing matters relating to souls. I felt your soul get connected to hers just now – and there was no hostility. Logic would suggest you two communicated in either hers or your Reflection of the soul."

Skullius walked forward and analysed the hand lathered with boils, stuck to the wall. Elita's sword had sliced the two fingers which had been keeping the tall woman's Divine Blessing active, but the whole of it remained untouched.

"You think she'd lie to me even in that state?" Elita asked.

"Discerning the intentions of others is a very hard thing. Perhaps I'm wrong. I'm a master of souls, not hearts," the Warmoth said.

Elita gave the remains of the Paladin Champions a sombre look.

"They were killed by Revia first," she said. "She's here."

"I figured. Well, if I had to hazard a guess, then perhaps she is the person below us – the one with the unusual presence of Undeath. If she fought Actuass then..." Skullius was all but certain at this point. Below them, the pressure from the Treasure he had sensed was powerful, whipping against his senses, but he could feel things around it well enough. If the individual he was sensing was Revia, she was just outside its range.

Skullius could have confirmed it and obliterated the pressure from the Treasure in one go by using the [Legion Eyes], but he hadn't done so for two distinct reasons: one was that the [Legion Eyes] cost Amras to maintain, and so far, he hadn't used them against any enemy that could resist; he knew for a fact that would cost him more Amras. Additionally, because of the many varying constructs that had been in the way between him and the Treasure below all the way from the tower above, he had feared eliminating things he'd wish he hadn't later. (The Legion Eyes were dangerous, after all.)

Skullius urged Elita down to the levels below. There were many more corpses around, Skullius sensed some far off, in what was probably the Purity Knights Barrion that Elita had mentioned. He sensed someone alive there as well right then. It was almost as though the person had just sprung to life. Skullius hadn't sensed anything before now.

The features on the individual told him that it was a Paladin Champion. Skullius told Elita about it.

"I see. If they are actually alive... then I think it's someone really powerful. More powerful than the Fourth and possibly more powerful than Revia," she said afterwards.

The fact that Revia had defeated both the Fourth and Eight ranked Paladin Champions had been suspicious to Elita. Revia had been the Fifth-ranked Champion before, as even with her powerful Divine Blessing, she wasn't a match for the Champions above her, who were all Incandescent Stagers while she was merely a Master. This had to mean she'd grown stronger – much stronger.

The pressure from the Treasure grew more and more as the two dove down. When they finally reached the level Skullius had referenced before, everything became clear.

The floor on this level was torn, and only the bare remnants of it could be seen attached to the ends. In the certain of it was a giant, meaty, boil-infested lump that reached out into the lower levels. It had thick veins of reddish-green coursing through its whole and it throbbed like some messed up beating heart, releasing a pressure that was mostly obscured – hidden from the senses.

Skullius narrowed his eyes.

What obscured the presence of the large, hideous mass was a barrier erected around it, expelling bursts of purple-blue light in lens-flare-like rays. The barrier looked as though it were formed by tens of thousands of hexagonal shapes that flickered between material and immaterial.

This was the effect of the Treasure Skullius had sensed.

"Revia!" Elita suddenly cried and dashed towards the remains of the floor on this level.

There, looking to be unconscious or perhaps dead – in the final sense – was Revia, lying on her side.

Elita shook her, a look of dread on her face.

She seemed to note something from Revia and then look towards Skullius.

"Please..." she begged, near tears. "You could reverse her condition, couldn't you? Just like you did earlier."

Skullius considered the matter.

Indeed, he still had access to the properties of Maximum Catalyst, which he had used before – when explaining everything that'd happened to him since coming to Aigas in the Empyrean Bosom – to demonstrate that he really had been an Undead skeleton before.

Skullius had also used Maximum Catalyst back when he was swarmed by Undead minions during the battle with Actuass. He had changed the Undeath energy streaming through the Undead minions into life energy.

But would that work for Revia? She was different from typical undead minions and as Skullius recalled, in the instance when he used Maximum Catalyst against the Undead enemies, they died immediately after because of the wounds they had sustained before.

'Might as well try,' Skullius thought.

He had extended one of his hands towards Revia when the throbbing flesh bag with boils shuddered. It caused the entire Purity headquarter to tremble.

Suddenly, the vast pressure of its mass became more pronounced and an instant later, Skullius noticed something struggle free from within it!

Chapter 1312: Amalgam of Disease (2)

Whatever it was that was attempting to struggle free from the mass of diseased flesh didn't seem capable of doing so in such a short time. The wall of the throbbing mass protruded once, twice and thrice but it didn't give. Instead, the energy it gave off steadily began to push against the obscurity imposed – most likely – by the barrier around it.

The energy was definitely something a step beyond genuine Divine energy. It was Exora Amras. A Divine being was nesting within the disgusting blob layered in boils. But how?

Skullius couldn't make sense of it.

How was this even possible, and why was it happening now? How had this all happened on Aigas without being noticed?

He frowned.

Unlike before, he felt that the time for caution was over. It was time to get to the bottom of this, and perhaps in a more literal sense than Skullius had imagined.

Above his blind pair of eyes, slanted slits opened wide, pushing back the skin of his forehead, and a flash of golden-green light was expelled with demented ferocity. The [Legion Eyes] were unleashed, and right then, everything before him was made clearer in a variety of ways.

The barrier surrounding the large, disgusting mound of flesh was suddenly piled with a net of cracks, but it refused to yield so easily. Its resistance only lasted for a few seconds before it completely shattered, however, and once it did, the flesh organ was exposed to the full force of the [Legion Eyes].

Almost effortlessly, the flesh on the mass was stripped away, as were the walls of the Purity headquarters and everything in sight. Darkness littered with strings of connected Rules remained... and of course, what had been inside the mass of flesh.

Because of the theory that Elita had told Skullius earlier, the Hybrid Warmoth had been expecting the Second-ranked Paladin Champion to be the individual nestling in the mass of flesh. If she – as Elita had begun identifying them some minutes ago, to Skullius' surprise – truly had the ability to control plagues, it would only make sense that she'd be the one in there, right?

But it was not.

It was something a lot more sinister.

What was more or less a bloody skeleton with dried and rotting bits of flesh attached to it, adorned in the signature armour of the Paladin Champions, had been in the sack. It was strangely lively.

No. No, it was not. It was the thing in its hand that was lively.

The bloody skeleton was stationary, but the 'weapon' it wielded was the one that had been poking at the inside of the flesh mass just now.

It looked like a great sword, but only its hilt and cross guard, which looked like sculpted amethyst, looked as that of a common weapon. Its blade was no blade at all. It was another flesh body, only leaner, with smooth, sandy toned skin with a series of red and purple veins visible underneath. It looked to have been shaped like a sword before, but now, it was growing.

It took a moment for Skullius to realise it, but...

'My eyes aren't working on it at all!' he thought, and immediately used the guidance field to identify the flesh sword.

...!!!

~~~

[Deceptive Incubating Masterpiece]

+Realm (Wicked)+

A unique sword whose blade will ensnare anyone reflected on its surface in a snug, incubating cushion that responds with 100x efficiency to all forms beneficial stimulus from the outside.

...

~~~

The flesh sword... was a Realm rank Treasure! A storage item of sorts!

'No way! It's ANOTHER Treasure, different from the one that was erecting the barrier!' Skullius thought, and he focused his senses on what was below, deep down where the floor was broken, leading to the dark depths.

There, Skullius sensed the presence of a World rank Prime Treasure, a flimsy-looking spear stabbed into the ground. But it lay amidst a swarming mass of something atrocious.

'What the flesh is going on here?!' Skullius thought, horrified.

Down below, bonded together in a mess of different kinds of diseases – some kind of pox, swells, welts, zits, blackened flesh and whole lot more – was a whole host of Purity Knights, Paladin

Champions, what might have been thousands of commonfolk, Priests and... one pillar of eight people stitched together by revolting swathes of pus. There couldn't have been any less than five thousand people below!

It was hard to say if any of them was alive, even though the softest moans and groans could be heard.

Webs of thin, wet mucousy substances rose from the pile of bodies, and fed into the portion of the fleshy mass protruding above that was not in range of Skullius' [Legion Eyes]. From the webs, Skullius got an ominous feeling.

'Mortal Binding...?' he thought, shaken.

Of course!

Going by what Elita had said, if there was someone who could control diseases, it would be easy for them to accomplish Mortal Binding!

Mortal Binding required one to infuse their essence into many blessed beings. Imbuing five thousand people with disease was just crazy enough to work in fulfilling that requirement for the Second-ranked Champion, Skullius realised.

But... where was she? Was she the dead skeleton?

So many questions stood in the way of this, and Skullius couldn't think of them as leisurely as he would have liked.

The flesh sword throbbed, still resisting the power of his [Legion Eyes]. Tiny arms sprung out from either of its sides and grew rapidly, then hair grew on its skin when its end bulged to form a head. Legs emerged after and soon, a whole humanoid figure was spat out of the sword, but its back remained attached to the sword's tip (as it appeared, there was indeed a real blade attached to the sword. The figure snatched the sword from the bloody skeleton and floated in the nothingness created by the powers of the [Legion Eyes].

Skullius scowled.

'It's Divine...' he thought.

The figure was naked. It had feminine features, but... it wasn't human. Its hair was a solemn russet colour, long and wet. It was almost three meters tall, and its ears were quite large, pointed and coloured in black. Its eyes were white like Skullius', but there were hints of faint blue pupils within them, three for each eye.

The figure wore a bright smile as it squeezed the wetness from its hair, disregarding Skullius completely.

The Hybrid Warmoth didn't like that.

A [Ruining Cutter] was released from him in less than a blink, aiming for the feminine figure's neck. The woman – if she could be called that – noticed too late. She was a moment late in raising her sword, which could have easily parried the Andori.

However...

CLANG!

...It was another blade that blocked the visible slash.

It was Broodweiler.

Skullius was stunned, so stunned that he released his [Legion Eyes].

Everything returned to normal. The unnervingly tall woman was swallowed back into the giant flesh sack, though she immediately burst out of it and landed on what was left of the floor on this level, right next to her saviour, Elita.

Skullius slowly took in Elita's figure. Her shiny, true sapphire mask was on her face, which explained how she had managed to jump in the way of the [Ruining Cutter] in time, but Skullius could have hardly cared about that.

"Elita. What are you doing?" he asked in the coldest of voices.



## Chapter 1313: Elita's True Design

"Elita. What are you doing?" Skullius asked. His voice was cold, and the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] made sure to project his voice with material frigidness; flakes of cold spat from it, charged with purple-golden hue. The Parlous Nature, Maximum Frost surged, casting a visible halo outward.

For a few moments, Elita chose not to answer. She remained still, standing beside the naked woman with the russet-coloured hair and large, pointed Sif-like ears. It didn't take long for Skullius to grow impatient.

"I asked you a question, Elita," he hissed.

A sigh came from behind Elita's mask and with an effort, she pulled it off. A mixture of guilt and determination formed an odd expression on her visage. She didn't shy away from the furious blaze in Skullius' blank eyes. She could only meet it head-on.

The Hybrid Warmoth remembered that this was the same look she had worn when she had proposed her theory about the intentions of the Purity. She had never hidden away her eyes, choosing to meet his appraising gaze.

"It's not what you think, Skullius," she said, somewhat meekly.

Skullius furrowed her brows.

"What am I to make of this then?"

He couldn't stomach the thought that Elita... had been playing him. He had entertained the idea and discarded a chunk of it after they had their little chat back in the Empyrean Bosom. But now...

The tall inhuman woman beside Elita stared deeply at Skullius, even when she hunched to say something to the former Paladin Champion. She spoke boldly and with a strangely masculine voice. Skullius couldn't understand the words she said at all. It was a language he'd never heard of. It was foreign – the otherworldly sort of foreign – just like she was.

Elita shook her head and replied. Skullius couldn't understand the words she said either.

Being ignored like this only infuriated Skullius all the more, but before he could do anything with his rage, Elita spoke.

"I lied. I lied to you," she said. "And I'm sorry for that. I'll lose your trust, but I sincerely hope that doesn't make us enemies. I didn't lie to you with the intention of betrayal."

"This sure feels like a betrayal," Skullius said and his senses dug below where bodies plastered together in disease and rot like bulbous pastries festered. The separate pillar of eight moulded-together individuals swaying like some ominous, humanoid mushroom beaten by the wind, seemed to look up at him, its many faces contorting horribly. "And not just to me."

Elita had no immediate reply to that.

"What did you do?" Skullius asked sharply.

The woman beside Elita sneered at the Hybrid Warmoth as she placed the great sword she had spawned from on her shoulder. Skullius barely managed to hold in his fury.

"I was being truthful when I told you about the manner in which the Purity would use to create a Divine power of their own. The Cursed Bloods. The Paladin Champion. The massive pool of Divine energy. All that was true. The results of it are more than abundant," she said sullenly. Her gaze fell away from Skullius. "The lie comes with the point that I... orchestrated it all."

Skullius was taken aback. He couldn't have stopped himself from reacting visibly to this. The tall woman laughed, but he hardly cared.

"...What?" he said, his voice heavy. "You caused this?"

Elita stabbed Broodweiler into the ground.

"I did," she said firmly and glanced at the drooping, ravaged ball of nasty flesh the tall woman had spawned from as well as the bloody skeleton inside it. "I told you before. I've seen worlds where people take their religion the wrong way, using it to hurry towards truths that they don't understand. The Purity is no different, Skullius."

Skullius could hardly believe this was Elita speaking. He even entertained the idea that she was being manipulated, but that didn't seem to be the case.

"And what then? So, you brought it upon yourself to do what exactly?" he said. "And what is that thing beside you?"

Elita seemed to strain when she answered.

"I brought it upon myself to do something that a weaker me would have never done. I used the greed of the Purity and the natural weakness of the Cursed Bloods to bring forth something that I knew would benefit a lot of people in the long-run," she explained, her brow twitching. "The Purity really has no bearing on this world. The Deities never truly needed them – they have their Heralds. The nine recognised this – I'm sure – and they needed a little steering, a little tipping, and they would allow themselves to sink deep into their desire for power and control."

"The Purity is no different from the Guilds Association at all, save for the fancy armour and robes, Skullius. Believe me. I've seen this truth in many other worlds."

Skullius scowled. He had no words.

It had been naïve of him to assume months in the great void, under Void's tutelage wouldn't skew Elita's ideology.

He had been wrong to give up on his suspicions so early.

Unfortunately, for the Hybrid Warmoth though, he was soon met with even greater evidence of his folly.

Elita continued.

"I believe I also told you that you can't survive in the great void without help, without allies."

She gave an odd look to her 'friend'. The tall woman scoffed, grinned at Skullius... and then a torrent of Voided Death Essence blasted from her body, washing over every nook and cranny of the Purity headquarters!

...!!!

Skullius was once again taken aback.

This... this woman was a Voided Deathform?!

The pressure from her Voided Death Essence was incredible. It was strangely lethal, moreso than Elita's!

'You're kidding me!' Skullius thought.

The naked woman seemed to revel in her explosion of essence. She wore a deeply enthused look and licked her lips; to be fair, they were dry – her whole body too.

Elita gave the woman a slap on the wrist. The woman snorted and reined in her deep reserves of Voided Death Essence. Elita then introduced her.

"This is Uyuniya. A fellow sister in Voided Death, freshly made Divine by me."

Chapter 1314: Say It Again, But Louder

"This is Uyuniya, A fellow sister in Voided Death, freshly made Divine by me."

Skullius gaped. The tall creature, Uyuniya, as she was apparently called, guffawed at his reaction once again and for the second time, Skullius couldn't have cared for it. He gave a disbelieving gaze to Elita. His phantoms helped him process the chaos in his mind, but even then, the frustration leaked on his face.

All of a sudden, some of the things (on top of what she had already reminded him of) Elita had said and done earlier started making sense.

"Do you consider me, a Voided Deathform, your enemy?" she had asked him after confronting him about his distrust in the Empyrean Hatcher.

"You're going to have to deal with them. I still haven't recovered all my Voided Death Essence," she had said when the Cavern had attacked them right after they reappeared in Aigas. This had been her excuse whenever else there was a battle along the way, except with Fulgardt.

Skullius couldn't help but wonder, as he saw how battle-ready Elita was right now.

'Was she saving her essence for this moment?' he thought, baffled. Did Elita really mean to fight him over this?

Right then, the repulsive pillar of human flesh made out of the bodies of the nine – or rather, the eight – cried out:

"ELITA! SAY IT LOUDER! SAY IT TRUE! THIS WAS YOUR DOING?!"

Elita didn't pay them any attention whatsoever. Instead, she kept her eyes on Skullius.

"So, all that about the injustice of Cursed Bloods was a lie too? You never gave a flesh about them, did you?" he said, his senses scouring over the presences of several dozens of Cursed Bloods. "I had thought you meant to save them, not include them in this scheme of yours. How could you declare yourself a Paladin Champion with all this blood on your hands?"

Elita flared but she quickly soaked in her rage. Skullius could tell he touched a nerve, but not in the way he thought he had.

"I beg of you. Don't speak to me of Cursed Bloods as if you truly understand them, Skullius," she said warningly. Skullius was taken aback. "I did them all a favour. You want to know why they are privileged with living inside the Purity Headquarters? It's because they are weak and frail. The Purity only kept them... us, close in order to give a benevolent front to the Purity Knights and Paladin Champions – to gain their favour. As if they cared and were keeping the legacy of fallen vessels from long ago intact. When I alone arose as a strong Cursed Blood capable of joining the ranks of Knights, they took the chance to promote their 'kindness'."

Elita looked livid.

"ELITA!" the nine cried from below. She ignored.

"Most Cursed Bloods are always bedridden. Some delirious. Some in indefinite comas. What I did allowed them to be released from this hell," she said.

Skullius wasn't convinced at all. He wasn't sure Elita was convinced by her own words either.

An instant later, his attention was stolen by a breeze that whipped from his left. A soul was leaving a body. Revia had finally tasted true death after so many months since being killed.

With a thought, Skullius conjured a beam of purple-gold light that thundered down on Revia's body. He used Maximum Catalyst's Reversion to draw back in her soul and then doubled down on Reversion's output, reverting Revia's body to a state from before she was altered by the masked man with Undeath!

The silver-haired Spirit Warden gasped in a long breath, her eyes shooting wide open.

Skullius was a little surprised it worked so well, but he didn't dwell on that. Instead...

"Don't get me wrong, Elita. When I think about this rationally, maybe it's not as insane as it appears, apart from the fact that you hid it all from me, knowing full well how I'd react in the end. I can't imagine we talked about trusting each other when you hid something like this from me. However, I do wonder... were you training with void all these months, or was she reshaping how you think?"

Elita was gaping. She couldn't have given an honest answer to Skullius with Revia mirroring her expression, completely dumbfounded.

"Elita..." Revia shuddered as she spoke the name. "You...you're here... You're alive..."

Revia barely spared Skullius so much as a glance. She stood up, ignoring the fact that she was somehow alive, and in the natural sense. Her Blessing was thrumming in her body, but not because her flesh had learned it from her soul. Her body was healthy – in peak condition – but she hardly paid it any attention at all.

She began to cry bitterly.

"I came here looking for you! I-I was so convinced you were...! You're here!" Revia made to dash towards Elita to embrace her, but Skullius froze her legs with Maximum Frost before she even made the motion.

Revia was shocked. With a tear-streaked face, she finally turned to look at Skullius, but he remained focused on Elita.

"I wonder, Elita. Would you claim you're on the right path, that you're still the same person as before at your core, in front of this sister of yours? Tell me what you just said again, but this time, make sure she hears it all," he said. "Sure, I might not know about Cursed Bloods, but what about the Purity Knights and Champions you implicated? Was that part of your design as well?"

Elita was struggling, straining. She gritted her teeth and her eyes glistened.

"That wasn't supposed to happen! I didn't think they would stick with the nine after learning how corrupt and selfish they were! The Champions and Knights follow the Purity out of loyalty to the doctrine of the Deities, not because the nine have the power to restrain them! I thought... I thought those like me would leave..." It was as though Elita's face belonged to some aggrieved old woman.

Revia was stricken aghast by what she said. The colour on her pretty face seemed to drain slightly.

What allegations was Elita defending herself against?

Skullius scoffed.

He turned to the Spirit Warden.

"Perhaps you can talk some sense into your sister," he said to her. Revia didn't understand what he meant, but she did get the reassuring feeling that Skullius wasn't her enemy.

"Elita," she said as she turned to the woman, "what's happening?"

Elita didn't answer. She hid her face with her mask again.

Uyuniya placed a hand on her shoulder, and pointed her great sword at Skullius with a harsh look. She then said something else that Skullius couldn't understand. The sneer gave away the intent of her words, however.

Unfortunately for Uyuniya, Skullius had just about had enough of her snark.

Before anyone could comprehend the 'how', the naked Voided Deathform had vanished, sent flying through the wall by some furious blow unseen!

#### Chapter 1315: Spectrum (1)

Elita was both surprised and unsurprised by the sudden attack. The force of Uyuniya flying and knocking into the wall behind her sent a ruthless gust pushing against her back. The former Paladin Champion couldn't have said her friend didn't have it coming though. Even with the language barrier, it wasn't too difficult to discern the meaning of what someone else was saying if you added sneers, leers and grins. She sighed behind her mask.

Revia turned pale.

She was already lost to what was happening here, but the frightening power she had sensed just now almost sent her over the edge. She felt goosebumps on her skin, something she hadn't felt in a very long while. She truly was alive.

The restrictive ice on her legs suddenly melted away, and Skullius began walking towards Elita. Revia didn't know what to do or say to this. While she got that Skullius likely wasn't her enemy, it did seem as though some hostility was brewing between him and Elita.

"Your friend has a big mouth," Skullius said to Elita once he was close to her.

The former Paladin Champion pulled her sword from the ground.

"She's not very friendly to anomalies outside our spectrum. Though she's never encountered a Null Lifeform like you, that doesn't mean she'll entertain your presence. She views you the same as she does Undead creatures. My friendliness towards you is also... unacceptable to her," she said.

"I see," Skullius said. So, that's what all that bark was about. He looked at Elita's Broodweiler. "I don't want to fight you over this."



"Neither do I, Skullius. Like I said, I never meant to hurt you. I just didn't think you'd understand. And well, you don't. That's fine. I couldn't ask you to fast track your understanding of who I am now." She looked at Revia. "Or you, Revia."

The Spirit Warden didn't know what kind of face to make nor which of her thousands of questions to ask first.

Skullius breathed out a chilled breath.

Something faster than light came zipping his way, brandishing a great sword malevolently!

Uyuniya swung the blade once she was only two meters away from Skullius!

...But she was forced to stop.

A layer of frost and stitches instantly covered her body, killing her momentum and zeal simultaneously; the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] wouldn't allow her approach its master. It couldn't bind her sword, however. It alone remained unfrozen and unstitched while still in Uyuniya's grip.

Elita flinched.

Skullius merely looked at the iced subject with distaste.

"You know, it's going to be pretty difficult for me NOT to kill her if she keeps provoking me like this," Skullius said, and his senses searched Elita thoroughly for her response. "You must know this already, Elita. I can't do half measures when it comes to other Divines."

If Elita's face wasn't hidden, Skullius would have seen the conflict and strain on it.

"Uyuniya is..." she began, but Skullius didn't hear the rest.

...!!!

The Hybrid Warmoth was suddenly smacked ten meters backwards and into the wall, much to his astonishment!

'Huh?'

He had been hit!

But by what?

Something had bypassed the protection from his nimbus!

Uyuniya immediately unthawed, Voided Death Essence blazing around her. Soon, her tall, naked figure was standing tall and proud, that arrogant grin back on her face.

Skullius pushed himself out of the wall, frowning. Something unseen had struck him just now. It was not a typical attack, otherwise his nimbus would have made an attempt to stop it. He was sure it wasn't from Uyuniya's great sword or some application of Voided Death Essence.

He saw Elita rush up to Uyuniya and yell something at her, but the tall woman merely scoffed. She hissed something back that was probably a rejection of whatever idea Elita had presented. It was fast becoming clear to Skullius that Elita didn't have any hold over her friend, and in that case...

"I'm guessing a fight is unavoidable?" he said to the former Paladin Champion.

"Please wait!" Elita said to Skullius before nudging Uyuniya and appealing to her again. The woman gave a dark gaze and barked something that made Elita melt. Uyuniya pointed at Skullius with her great sword and then at herself.

The Hybrid Warmoth saw Elita's tense shoulders slump. He didn't like the look of that.

"Well?" he asked.

Elita let out a frustrated breath.

"Please don't fight her, Skullius," she begged. "Even though she's just become Divine, she knows more than you and me combined when it comes to Divine powers."

Skullius shook his head.

"I'm not the hostile one here. And do you really think I'd lose to her?" he said.

Elita hesitated only for a moment.

"No. And that's why I'm appealing to you."

"Appeal to her."

"She's not the type to listen to someone beneath her! She wasn't some average powerhouse in her world. She was a princess. And she is well older than me," Elita said, agitated.

Uyuniya seemed to be enjoying their squabble. She snapped her fingers and Skullius sensed something too thin for the naked eye to see wafting towards her from the air, condensing and forming clothing for her.

To his surprise, it was viruses of different natures!

They merged with bizarre particles in the air to form a battle dress for Uyuniya. It flickered between odd shades of crimson, purple and poison green, with a faint checkered design to its entirety. It was rather long, with a large ribbon around its waist that flailed like a whip behind Uyuniya. The dress hugged her plump breasts but left her shoulders, arms and most of her abdomen free.

Uyuniya seemed rather satisfied with it, judging by the twinkle in her three-pupiled eyes, but Skullius looked appalled.

'Did she acquire the ability to control plagues?' he thought.

He wasn't sure how exactly Elita had orchestrated everything here from outside Aigas – how she smuggled Uyuniya and the Treasures into Aigas, for instance – but the properties of Uyuniya's great sword, the Deceptive Incubating Masterpiece, did reveal one thing: Uyuniya had been bonded to the

Second ranked Paladin Champion while she was 'incubating' in the sword. (The remains of the Champion were still visible in the large blob of an organ.)

Uyuniya seemed ready for battle. She gave a daring look to Elita and said something else that seemed to shake her faith.

Revia found herself confused when Elita suddenly brandished her sword against Skullius in the next instant.

"I'm sorry, Skullius," she said and didn't elaborate.

"I see," Skullius said, but hid his thoughts. With one of his hands, he pulled from his nimbus the golden gauntlet, a Realm Rank Treasure, the Malefic Gold Hand

Chapter 1316: Spectrum (2)

The Malefic Gold Hand clanked as it was united with Skullius' arm. Its thousands of parts shifted continuously, narrowing its shape until it fit the Hybrid Warmoth's hand perfectly. A solemn, white energy hissed from its pointed, protruding knuckles, mirroring its readiness for battle. Like many Treasures, Skullius could sense its will. It had long submitted to him before this point, like a majority of the Treasures in the Warmoth's Treasury.

Both Uyuniya and Elita readied themselves as well.

Skullius wiggled his fingers hidden within the gauntlet.

'We're really doing this, huh?' he thought as he focused on Elita. He could tell that she hadn't been lying before she was forced to contradict herself almost immediately. She didn't mean to fight him. Something between her and Uyuniya forced her hand. Skullius didn't know what that could possibly be until Serenity shed some light on it.

"I'm afraid there are some things you will find hard to understand when you have no have no chance of experiencing them at the moment," she said to him. "You haven't had allies in other Null Lifeforms asides from your Apostles and the creatures you've created through the Ungodly Flames of Debauchery."

She hadn't reacted as vibrantly to Elita's betrayal. Quite honestly, that fact soothed Skullius.

'Hmm. I suppose if I was in her shoes, I wouldn't hesitate to defend my kin either,' Skullius thought.

However...

"Elita," he said, "I won't be holding back on you."

The former Paladin Champion didn't answer. She merely corrected her stance and issued large volumes of Voided Death Essence from her body.

"ELITA!" the nine cried to her in that very instant, and their grating voices acted as the marker for the conflict to begin.

Revia watched as Elita, Skullius and Uyuniya suddenly vanished, leaving behind the atrocious effects of light and sound exploding everywhere. She guarded herself with Perfect Aura until the ringing and superheating air calmed and cooled. When she searched around her, she found that she couldn't see or sense Elita, Skullius or Uyuniya anymore.

"REVIA! LIVING REVIA!" the nine now called to her.

Revia looked down at them from the torn floor. Their pillar of combined flesh was swaying, their faces distorting; their eyes looked straight at her with no small amount of rage.

"Look! Look! LOOK AT WHAT YOUR BELOVED SISTER HAS DONE TO US! SHE CONFESSED HER TREACHERY! SHE DISHONOURS THE KNIGHTS AND PURITY! DON'T YOU SEE?" they cried in crooked voices. "YOU CAME SLAUGHTERING AND SPILLING BLOOD FOR HER SAKE, AND LOOK AT WHAT SHE HAS BECOME! THIS IS WHY WE STAMPED HER DOWN, WHY YOU SHOULD HELP US DO IT AGAIN!"

Revia scowled and chewed on her teeth.

How shameless.

She had expressed her intent for coming here earlier and the nine had responded to her with insults, proclaiming the new path they had chosen to take the Purity through. They had sent out the Purity Knights and Paladin Champions to kill her, but now, they were appealing to her, trying to turn her against Elita.

That was not possible, of course, but not because Elita had done no wrong.

No.

It was because Revia herself had just lost a sense of what was right and wrong.

Her reason for coming here – to get answers and avenge Elita – was dashed against a rock. She had been prepared to be punished for it after, but now...

Revia wasn't sure if the Elita she had been fighting for was the same anymore. Elita looked different, talked different and even felt different.

On top of all this, the life energy thrumming within her confused her by several pegs as well. Revia wasn't sure what to make of it. It had been a while since she actually felt like she was living.

All this contributed to making sure she didn't give a remark against the nine.

This, of course, angered them. Their fury was evident even with their ugly form.

"WORTHLESS GIRL! STAND THERE AND PERISH THEN! WE WILL MAKE THIS NEW ORDER, THIS NEW POWER OUR OWN STILL! WE WILL SHARPEN IT AGAINST YOU FIRST!" they shrieked and at once, Revia noticed something twitching from the corner of her eye. Stay tuned with m-v l|e'm,p y r

She looked and immediately, her senses flared.

The corpse, rather, the skeleton, in the bulbous flesh bag from which Uyuniya had sprouted, staggered out and landed on what remained of the floor on this level. It was a blood messy, glistening and pungent, yet its armour was intact.

Even though its sockets were hollow, Revia could tell it was glaring at her, ready to pounce.

"EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS CHEATED OF HER FULL STRENGTH, HER CORPSE REMAINS DIVINE AND UNDER OUR CONTROL!" the nine screamed. "YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE, REVIA!"

Boils that were too familiar to Revia started growing over the skeleton and some semblance of flesh was layered over it, pale, and green. It was the most unhealthy-looking skin Revia had ever seen, and worse yet, it seemed to possess some kind of festering virus.

Revia wouldn't have minded before, but now that she had a living body intolerant to disease and mortal weakness, she had to be careful.

'That's got to have been Mercella, the Second-ranked Champion. I wonder, since she can use Blessing even in this state – where she's likely dead already – does that mean her body learned to use the properties of her Blessing even if she doesn't have it anymore, like I did?' came the passing thought, but Revia didn't dwell on it.

She instantly began forming her Genuine Incarnation while wondering how Elita was doing.

\*

Elita was barely able to keep up with Uyuniya and Skullius. They were moving and clashing in instances that she could hardly follow; she only managed to confirm where they were once she heard the booming of the walls as they weathered their blows or Uyuniya's thrilled battle cry.

They were scaling the levels to the Purity Headquarters, obliterating them with ease, though Elita could tell neither of them was going all out. This was a great comfort.

Elita knew full well what Uyuniya was capable of. She came from a richer, wider world than Aigas, which had produced hundreds of Divine beings and she had been using Voided Death Essence for more than sixty years. Uyuniya's definition of going all out, especially now with how she had transcended mortality, would be catastrophic.

But this didn't mean she would be able to beat Skullius, Elita knew, not with that hidden power he had teased against Fulgardt. She could only hope Skullius wouldn't think it necessary to draw that out.

Chapter 1317: Spectrum (3)

Skullius was sent flying through the ceilings and floors of the upper levels of the Purity headquarters he and Elita had just scaled down from earlier. He only stopped after smashing into the ceiling of the second level, where the massive pool of water with the statue of Listafelle protruding from it could be seen.

As he had borne a hole through the pool, the waters immediately began to sink under.

'Again with that invisible attack. It's like a punch I cannot see. None of my Andori can even register it,' Skullius thought as he warped away from the ceiling and appeared over the water. He wasn't really harmed, but the mystery behind the nature of this attack was nagging him more than he liked.

Uyuniya shot through the waters in the pool and landed on the ceiling feet first; she was upside down. Her three-pupiled eyes looked down arrogantly at Skullius, her viral dress swaying solemnly, beautifully. Her height was more unnerving with the dress on, for some reason.

'She's keeping her distance now. She knows she'll be ensnared if she gets too close to me,' Skullius thought to himself. 'Well, let's see how well she fares against long range techniques while on guard.'

Skullius pointed a free hand toward her.

Six basic output [Ruining Cutters] stormed towards Uyuniya at once.

Her reaction was fierce. She brandished her Deceptive Incubating Masterpiece like a Swordmaster, parrying four of the slashes and cutting through the rest.

'Hoo. Her reaction speed is good, and it seems a Realm Rank weapon like hers can effortlessly ignore Grand tier Andori like my slashes,' Skullius thought, a little impressed.

But then he sent three more slashes with maximum output – three times the power compared to the first six. They flew thrice as fast as the last ones. Uyuniya was pressed. She managed to parry one by swinging her great sword forcefully to the right, which took her a moment more than she could afford; she had no answer to the rest except for reinforcing herself thoroughly with Voided Death Essence.

Unfortunately, that didn't help her as much as she would have hoped. One of the [Ruining Cutters] slashed through her shoulder and the other lopped off her leg and sent it spinning into the dwindling pool!



Skullius folded two of his arms.

'Interesting. She doesn't appear to have an Immortal Physique yet,' he analysed. An Immortal Physique lessened the damage taken from attacks like this. Skullius had seen it with the Cavern he had fought earlier. Even their souls were afforded some durability under the aspects of their Physique, not just their bodies.

Uyuniya didn't whine over her leg or the ghastly wound on her shoulder. Even as the slashes ripped through her, she kept her eyes on Skullius, anticipating his next move.

Skullius scoffed at her.

"Do you still want to do this?" he asked, and walked towards the statue of Listafelle. It held a great jar in its hands. "Anytime you want to stop this madness, just let me know. Though, I imagine you're even more determined to kill me now." Skullius touched the statue with the Malefic Gold Hand.

All of a sudden, its pale marble appearance was layered in stark gold. It then started to fold in on itself, its size reducing dramatically, its shape changing unrecognizably. Soon, the statue was a double-edged short sword. It had a golden hilt with a cross guard made of tiny little jars. As for its blade...

The blade was a dancing concentration of sky blue, sparkling water, its crispy edges outlined by the light from the torches plastered against the walls.

Uyuniya saw the sword and was immediately dashing away along the ceiling. Her Voided Death Essence collected around the stump of her leg and formed a new one that worked just as well as the last.

Skullius chortled.

'What are you running from?' he thought... and slashed her way with the short sword.

It was water that bridged the gap between him and Uyuniya.

It was water that followed the path of his slash, conjured by the tip of his short sword.

The Purity Headquarters was sliced through like a cake all the way to the surface and across thirty kilometers, leading into Emeradis past the Tattered Serpent's Throat!

Where the slash went through, furious torrents of water and water vapour rose, announcing the success of the attack.

Uyuniya had managed to dodge the slash. Skullius had seen her react to it closing in on her spectacularly. He didn't let up, but Uyuniya didn't keep running. She charged against him.

Just as keenly as she watched his blade's movement, he watched how she conjured that invisible attack of hers. There must have been a secret to it.

Skullius saw Uyuniya cock back her free arm and stab forth with her great sword at the same time.

BAM!

Once again, he was bit in the chest by something he could not see... but not before he slashed with the limit of his dexterity at Uyuniya, who wouldn't have been able to dodge his slash from her range.

As Skullius smashed through several walls, the Purity Headquarters was once again sliced through like cheese.

...But the Hybrid Warmoth's eyes sparkled. He felt the sting of the blow just now, but he was excited nevertheless.

'So that's... but how...?!'

How indeed.

Skullius had figured out the trick Uyuniya was using to attack him. Rather frustratingly, it exposed how ignorant he was about a great many things about Divinity.

He quickly warped back to where the pool's contents were draining, his spirits rising and quaking with enthusiasm.

"How many times are you going to save her from me?" he asked Elita who, while glowing with brilliant light, was standing in front of Uyuniya with Broodweiler propped up. The massive gash in the underground labyrinth extending past Uyuniya and exposing the dark night above explained just how timely Elita's arrival was.

The former Paladin Champion had blocked Skullius' attack with suspicious speed and power like before, but it clearly took her all to manage such a feat. Skullius could see her hands quivering ever so slightly.

He turned to Uyuniya.

"You're crafty," he said to her. "I didn't know the Broader Existence could be used to attack an opponent. Why don't you show me the trick a few more times?"

Chapter 1318: Spectrum (4)

Uyuniya wore a furious smile. It had been a long time since Skullius had seen someone don that kind of expression; perhaps fury and frustration were a pair that melded very well together.

It wasn't as though Uyuniya didn't expect Skullius to pick up on her trick eventually. Skullius imagined she was frustrated because her attacks weren't doing anything at all to him when she and him were supposed to be at the same level of Divinity. As a Voided Deathform, Skullius was sure Uyuniya had a guidance field. She was able to tell how strong he was.

As for her use of the Broader Existence to attack...

'I can't sense the attacks coming likely because of the same reason I can't sense another individual's Broader Existence and attack it directly. It's proven extremely difficult so far,' Skullius thought. 'Uyuniya's attacks are blunt and they hit decently hard. But is that all attacking with the Broader Existence can do? I am going to have to try it out myself. Maybe this battle has its upsides.'

While the Broader Existence of another was so hard to perceive, Skullius' own was all but clear. It was the space between his body and soul, but its existence wasn't quite as literal as the definition would have one believe. In some ways, it was akin to an invisible, expansive territory all around whose existence was validated by Skullius' body and soul, hence why it could be damaged by harming the body or soul when they separated from each other.

Skullius itched at the thought of weaponizing it. He turned to Elita who still remained guarding against a long gone blow in front of Uyuniya.

"I told you I wouldn't be holding back on you, right?" Skullius said to her.

"Do what you have to do," she replied as she brandished her sword, "and I'll do the same."

Skullius nodded... and unleashed his [Legion Eyes].

...!!!

Everything around him became darkness littered with strings of Rules. Everything except Uyuniya and Elita.

Skullius then closed his [Legion Eyes].

He took a step forward as he collected his findings from just now.

'Uyuniya and Elita both have Realm Rank weapons. I just used my [Legion Eyes], which are a Sage tier Andori, but they were rendered ineffective against these two because of their weapons. So, I suppose this means Realm Rank weapons are stronger than Sage tier Andori and below. Which also means my arsenal of Andori in this default body isn't what's going to decide the battle.'

It was not a pleasing thought, but knowing about it was beneficial all the same to Skullius.

He raised his water-bladed sword and swung down.

Again, a catastrophe befell the Purity headquarters. A slash made of beautiful swirls of liquid struck at Elita, intent on cleaving through her and everything else in its path.

The short sword, forged from the statue of Listafelle mystically transformed through the Malefic Gold Hand, was a Realm Rank Treasure fated to last for only a minute.

The Malefic Gold Hand transformed anything Skullius touched into a weapon of the same rank as its own. Intentions and mysteries tied to the object touched by the gauntlet would be weaponised and combined with traits of the user's abilities for devastating attacks. In the current instance, as the statue Skullius had touched was linked to Listafelle, it became a sword capable of discharging slashes empowered by mythical waters – as the Deitess Listafelle was Aigas' seas.

The attacks mirrored Skullius' two slicing Andori [Elusive Meta Carver] and [Ruining Cutter], but the attack power was no longer at the Grand tier. It was at the peak of the Sage tier!

But be that as it may...

CLANG!

For an instant, Elita's body became a blinding torrent of light and she successfully parried the water slash!

Skullius found that suspicious.

Elita was exceptionally powerful with her mask on.

She had been able to catch Boron off guard and slice through his Broader Existence.

She had been able to catch Fulgardt off guard and disrupt his momentum back in Maqi.

And now, she was successfully warding off Divine attacks she had no business being able to react to.

'I'll take the fight to you then,' Skullius thought, and he darted forth while sending three [Ruining Cutters] at maximum output at Elita and Uyuniya – one at the former, two at the latter.

Elita responded way better than Uyuniya. She swatted the Cutters headed her way easily while Uyuniya struggled to deflect one. Elita had to parry the other one away for her.

But Skullius was already upon them by the time they were done saving themselves. He had warped behind Uyuniya before she realised he was near, and a split moment later, her body was already stitched and freezing from being near his nimbus.

However...

BAAAM!

Uyuniya managed one blow from her Broader Existence to Skullius' face and he grunted while staggering back. He hadn't expected it. Before he could recover, Elita grabbed Uyuniya and flashed away with her.

As soon as Skullius recovered the lights in his head, he sent a stream of [Ruining Cutters] at the duo. Elita's figure obtained another shocking beam of radiance and she began shredding through the slashes rapidly with Broodweiler. At the same time, Uyuniya covered her face with her hand, and Voided Death Essence exploded outward... creating a mask over her face!

When Skullius saw this, he immediately drew upon the power of the [King of Severing Twilight: AfterDark]. Darkness blasted out of him as though he were a breached dam wall and enveloped everything in sight without exception. On the outside, the darkness forged a beautiful mansion with a series of layers, all of them growing smaller as it ascended, but on the inside, it was all darkness.

This was the [Dousing Sanctum], a sub-application of [King of Severing Twilight: AfterDark]. It drowned Uyuniya and Elita within it, hiding their outlines in black.

However... the glow of their masks remained brilliant even in the darkness.

One was true sapphire, and the other was a hard magenta, plain, but ominous nonetheless.

Chapter 1319: Spectrum (5)

The Mastered Void Gate.

It was the first of three steps to the special powers of a Voided Deathform.

A user of Voided Death interpreted the void in their own way to establish what kind of power they could be granted through the Void Gate. Skullius had seen one interpretation of the void by Aurolio, where he manifested strength in many different forms – clones, impressive defense, etc.

Once a user was inspired and decided the kind of power they desired, a Bare Guise would be a formed, a mask that noted their achievement and qualified them as a non-standard Voided Deathform.

It was clear to Skullius already that both Elita and Uyuniya were much better Voided Death users than Aurolio. For Aurolio couldn't have contended against him in the least, not with the power he had now.

Because of this, even though the two ladies were trapped in his Dousing Sanctum, he didn't consider them defeated yet. Instead, he chose to take them a lot more seriously.

The validity of his choice was emphasised when Uyuniya suddenly expelled a film of Voided Death Essence that expelled the darkness from her outline, detaching her figure of the endless swathe of black. The film of energy was so bright that it even gave some of the objects lathered in the darkness simple highlights, noting their positions.

That was a feat in and of itself. It made Skullius wonder...

'Why the hell is her Voided Death Essence so strong?'

But just as he wondered, Uyuniya shouted something he could not hear and then she brandished her great sword, pointing it in his direction. But she didn't attack with it. Instead...

...!!!

All of a sudden, Skullius found his senses dulling.

His ears seemed to flee.

His sense of touch abandoned him.

His nose failed.

Even his unnatural ability to sense the world around him in great detail was stolen.

'What the...!'

Skullius tried to perceive everything going on using the darkness from the Dousing Sanctum, but it was no use. It wasn't working!

All of a sudden, he lost his ability to identify mana too, and then worse, his ability to recognise his Broader Existence!

Never before had the Hybrid Warmoth suffered such a treacherous degree of existential dread in such a short span of time. He lost touch with everything, and for a moment, it seemed as though something inside of him snapped.

He went mad.

Skullius lost touch with himself – his name, his identity. He even lost touch with his mind.

But then...

"SKULLIUS!" Serenity called from unseen, obscure depths. The voice came with power and reassurance, and the Hybrid Warmoth's senses were restored at once. However, this might not have been a good thing.

"ARRRRRGHHHHH!" Skullius shrieked in agony.

A terrible gash had cut deep into his neck. A great sword gripped firmly by a tall, masked alien woman had found its way into his flesh, and was a moment away from cleaving his head off!

Sensing his Broader Existence again as well as all the Andori and Amras stored within it, Skullius immediately fuelled the [Entropy's Harmonising Nimbus] – which had been forced to vanish after he lost access to the core of his powers. It billowed like a massive blanket outward and crackled with merigold Ju`wtte that – without waiting for Skullius' permission – rushed in tangles to smite Uyuniya dead!

The bolts, thick as a man, lit the disappearing darkness of the Dousing Sanctum, and struck true.



However, a figure bathed in equal portions of brilliant light managed to reach Uyuniya just in time and with her Broodweiler, she split apart the merigold serpents with graceful swings of her blade. She slashed through every single one of them!

But then Skullius was against her himself. He was furious. His body, wreathed in Ju`wtte and a golden white light seemed to become a bolt of lightning itself and he smashed into Elita. The impact was atrocious.

Elita screamed aloud as the Purity headquarters groaned and crumbled. Skullius sent two sets of fists crashing cruelly into her chest. She felt them despite the black and silver armour she wore. She was sent tumbling against the air for dozens of kilometers.

At almost the same time, Skullius had turned towards Uyuniya already, bloodlusted. He was about to strike when...

'NOT AGAIN!'

He lost touch with his senses, and became... nothing.

He couldn't tell time.

He couldn't tell space.

He couldn't identify himself.

And again came Serenity's voice.

"WAKE UP, SKULLIUS!"

And again Skullius was in agony.

A great sword had gone through his head and sliced half of it off. Uyuniya seemed to notice that Skullius came to. She hurriedly placed her hand on Skullius' bare chest and he felt Voided Death Essence condense and gather in her palm... before igniting like a bomb!

The ignition of the energy began, but Skullius didn't let it continue.

Once he gained access to his Broader Existence again, [Sagacious Antiphon of Dawnlight] sprang to life and instantly healed his injuries. As it performed this feat, Skullius and his phantoms unleashed two of his Parlous Natures at once.

Skullius first fuelled Frigid Time – a mix of Absolute Frost and Integral Time. The detonation of Voided Death Essence just now was trapped in a filter that turned it a sickly shade of blue and slowed it down considerably!

'I meant to stop it completely, dammit!' Skullius cursed inwardly, but went on.

He then activated his latest Exotic Parlous Nature, Second Divine Sinew, which was obsessed over by Primeval Deities.

At once, another one of him was created, complete with all his Andori, his Parlous Natures and Physiques!

The replica also possessed a Broader Existence – of course – though it was 40% weaker than that of the original.

Uyuniya darted back when she saw and sensed the power of the replica and its properties. Indeed, she must have known how unusual it was.

This was far from a common thing. It was no ordinary clone.

Skullius scoffed, and the clone sent a series of [Ruining Cutters] against Uyuniya while also wisely coating itself with a series of [Elusive Meta Carvers]!

A shocking radiance appeared right in front of Uyuniya and again Elita emerged, cutting down all the slashes, but the two Skullius were upon them both the instant she was done.

Right then, as the two on two was about to begin, Elita and Uyuniya began applying Voided Death Essence in a way Skullius had yet to see.

Elita was the one to shout the name of an ability that would inspire both fury and fascination in the Hybrid Warmoth.

"Void Clot!"

#### Chapter 1320: Truths In The Dark

Seven tumor bombs whipped through the air, tracking her movements. Revia knew no rest. They were on her no matter which direction she chose to run. She even slipped through the slimmest, narrowest cracks in the damaged, crumbling underground levels of the Purity headquarters, but they shrank and expanded as needed. They throbbed tauntingly, swelling with grotesque flesh and ooze that promised to singe her at the very least.

This was how Mercella, the Second-ranked Paladin Champion had fought indeed. Even if her body was now a simple husk – a bloody skeleton adorned in armor – her fighting style remained the same. She had always enjoyed burdening her opponents with a battle on two fronts – one from the tracking tumors, which she found easiest to construct with plagues, and the other with her own body.

...And as such, as fast as Revia was with her Divine Blessing, Hearts of Clarity, it quickly became less surprising when Mercella suddenly snatched her from the air and flung her towards one of the throbbing tumors. The squelching ball was about the size of a human head, and on contact, it exploded to release a great number of foul-smelling, bloody tendrils that would have borne through Revia if she didn't guard desperately with her Perfect Aura.

The impact from them sent her smashing through several walls though.

She vomited blood once her momentum ceased and she thudded onto a floor.

Mercella was strong before, but she had never been this strong against her. Revia couldn't have known, but Mercella was now a Divine vessel. Her skeletal body and powers now transcended the threshold of mortality, but she owned no soul. She and Uyuniya had shared part in the process to reach Divinity as per Elita's design, but Mercella was now merely a puppet of the nine.

Revia struggled to a stand.

'Damn this mortal body!' she thought, but rebuked herself immediately after. 'Ah, I can't believe I missed being like this. The possibility of death, and the less drab emotions. Did becoming an undead affect my mood?'

Right then, more tumors sprung out of nowhere, racing towards her.

Revia formed a blade with her Perfect Aura and knocked away the tumors away as speedily as she could. Her hands flashed about at dozens of times the speed of sound, blurring in the dark of the night. However, fatigue was slowly piling. Warding away the tumors for one instance was no victory.

She dodged the rest, zipping here and there over long stretches with minimal steps.

Hearts of Clarity gave her three silver hearts that expelled threads throughout her body to support high speed movement. Revia hadn't felt the strain of this Divine Blessing since becoming an undead because her body had learned to use it without the hearts, as though the freakish speed it gave was a natural part of her, but now...

Revia took a sudden blow to the face by Mercella. Unlike the half-hearted ones from before, this one broke her jaw and a chunk of her skull and she screamed as she tumbled across hundreds of meters.

As a warrior, she couldn't lie down and listen to the sting of her wounds, however. She got up quickly, swaying slightly.

"How bold," a voice remarked.

Revia flinched. Her right eye was drowned in blood and the right side of her face looked as though it had been bitten into. She spat a blob of blood and searched for the source of the voice.

An old man with slicked-back blonde hair and eyes beginning to whiten with blindness slid into view. He was draped in the same thick, holy robes Revia remembered from back then, when he first appeared before her when she was younger.

However, diseased boils made his skin their fort, deforming his appearance.

"Valis..." Revia said breathlessly. "You too?"

Revia hadn't managed to think about it, but she hadn't imagined this High Priest, the man who took her from her sorrows, gave her purpose – a directive from the Deities, he had said – and even fought with her against the masked man back then in the Isise, would also be corrupted.

"If you mean even I desired a new order to the Purity's strength, you are right," Valis said. His mouth was strangely lop-sided. "Seeing how desperately you're fighting, I wonder what is driving you now."

Revia was lost for words. She bit her lips, but her guard never slackened.

"You were always an anomaly, my dear. Truth be told, I only brought you into the Purity because of your talent, nothing more. There was a fire in you, but it blew in the wind, never having a course of its own. Meeting Elita certainly sharpened you, but it was a shame that you never managed to grow your own backbone. Even now, I see that you are lost."

Revia took in measured breaths.

"I can believe that. I never did buy into your sacred purpose for me anyway," she said, but the hurt in her voice was all too clear.

"You never did. But perhaps neither did we. Hence why all this is happening. Even if your sister crafted it all, we shall ride it for the greater good. More good than we ever did under the doctrine of the Deities," Valis said. "But for an aimless flame like you, you must be doused here, my dear."

The skeleton of Mercella crept in from the darkness next to Valis along with a dozen tumors.

Revia scowled.

"I suppose this is goodbye to all fantasies," she said, preparing for what was most certainly death with a load of regret. She didn't want to die before talking to Elita. She wanted so dearly to explain and to hear her explain herself, but... "My penance is a little too light though."

As Mercella took a step her way, someone else also approached Revia and stood by her side. He was no less bloodied and battered than she was, but he was very lively.

A terrible hue stormed from his jian sword, and a sharp look crept from his eyes.

"Your penance isn't here yet," Alaris said as he brandished his sword. Revia recoiled in surprise.

"You were alive..." she said, but her voice thrummed with life.

"Just enough to be here right now," Alaris said and he narrowed his eye to the sight of Mercella.  
"But perhaps not for long."